Our Boys and Girls

HURRAH FOR THE BOY!

By B. E. Bush.

The rain was pouring down. It had poured all day. The smooth, paved street, presenting as it did a solid bottom through which no drops could leak away, was turned into a rushing river. To cross it and keep dry was impossible.

A grating over the top of the sewer should have let the water down, but it did not. The day before the air had been full of beautiful, falling, yellow leaves. Today, those same leaves were anything but lovely. Sodden and brown, they drifted into piles wherever the currents moved them. The stream of water swept them sluggishly along until they came to the grating, where they halted. It was no wonder that the water did not drain away from the street, for the grating that led to the sewer was choked completely with the masses of wet leaves.

Men came striding along in wet, flapping raincoats, looking neither to the right nor left. They gave a long jump when they reached the street crossing, and some were almost fortunate enough to clear the stream, but all got their feet wet.

Men in automobiles skidded through the water. It splashed high on each side, reaching above the wheels in a sheet of spray. Men in buggies and carriages and delivery wagons drove their horses splashing through the ever-increasing stream.

Business men, college men, teachers and preachers jumped over the water, but no one thought of looking for a remedy. Women and girls, like ghosts in their monotonous, close-sheathing raincoats, paused before the stream with little squeals of dismay, and attempted unsuccessfully to go around it. Although they made wide detours, it is doubtful if any of them reached the other side without wet feet.

Then the Boy came along whistling. He wasn't more than twelve years old, and his black raincoat and rain hat were shining partly because they were made of glossy black rubber, and partly because they were so very wet. He stopped when he came upon the running stream at the street crossing, and looked toward the corner where the grated opening into the sewer was situated. The unsightly mass of sodden brown leaves came into his vision. Apparently, he alone, of all who had passed, took time to think why these leaves had lodged there.

He waded over to the piled-up mound. He rolled up his sleeve and, bending over, thrust in his slim young arm. Such a mass of sticky wet leaves as he brought up! Again he thrust it in at the farther side of the grating. Armful after armful of obstruction he brought out from the opening. Before he had finished, the water in the street began to go down. The next man who passed found the stream only half as wide as the man before him had found it. Then some ladies crossed it without going in over their rubbers. Soon it all had flowed away, and the crossing could be made with comparative ease.

The Boy went whistling on, and never seemed to know that he had done a fine thing. But he had eased the walking of dozens of people, and had, perhaps, saved more than one case of diphtheria, or pneumonia, due to wet feet. And I said to myself from my window chair, where I watch the passing at the corner, "Hurrah for the Boy! He was worth more than all the men who passed at that crossing. He alone had used his eyes to find a reason for the inconvenience all had suffered, and put his boyish brain to work to discover a remedy. Hurrah for the Boy!"—King's Treasuries.

A BRAVE LITTLE SOLDIER.

By Francis McKinnon Morton.

A great surgeon from across the sea was visiting in a small Southern city, and because he knew so much about some kinds of diseases all of the hospitals and doctors within reach wanted his help.

One morning he was visiting, with a doctor, the different wards of a children's hospital. The morning was close and warm and the sky outside was heavy and gray, as if a storm might break at any minute.

The sick children were nervous and restless and fretful, while the crippled ones complained of everything and soon grew tired of books and pictures.

The hospital was not out in the green fields or down by the seashore, but right in the heart of the city, where low roofs and other houses and a strip of blue sky made up the outlook from the windows.

Even the house doctors and the nurses looked fagged out and tired and the great surgeon seemed depressed by it all.

"You've no business with a hospital down here in the city," he said sharply, "and especially a hospital for children!"

"Well, you mustn't blame me for that!" said the doctor irritably, and they might have gone on and said more that was quite as useless, only just then a wonderful mocking-bird poured out his rich whistling song all through the dark building.

The surgeon stopped short and listened, and soft lights came into his steely blue eyes and little tender smiles began settling down on his rugged face. "A nightingale, here in this country?" he said wonderingly.

"No, it must be your Southern mocking-bird that I've read so much about. How wonderful it is! It makes one believe in angels!"

"It's a little human bird," answered the doctor with a tender softness in his voice. "That's our Little Soldier."

"A soldier in a children's hospital?" asked the surgeon. "I don't understand that."

"Well, you know there are two kinds of soldiers," said the doctor. "One kind wear bright uniforms with gold lace and shining swords and go marching off to war; and the other kind wear no uniforms at all, but just stay at home and face their duty every day as it comes along. Our Little Soldier is one of this kind."

Then the doctor led the way to where a small boy with a thin white face sat by an open window. One leg was all bound up in an iron brace and little twinges of pain now and then flew over his sensitive face, but a brave light shone out of his true blue eyes, and the most beautiful bird music came out of his little whistling throat.

The great surgeon tiptoed softly over to where the Little Soldier sat, and touching him gently on the arm said, "How do you do it, my lad?"

"Oh," said the boy, smiling as best he could, "it's the pain that makes me do it so much. You know when you are hurting very, very much you just can't be quiet, and if you don't whistle you have to groan, and whistling seems much braver, and then it's much nicer for other people who have to listen to you. On days when the leg doesn't hurt so much I can read to the other fellows in here or I can paint pictures, but when the pain is too bad I can't do anything but whistle or groan, and whistling seems better!"

Then the great surgeon from over seas threw his head back to keep some tears from spilling out of his steely blue eyes, and taking a small iron cross from the inside of his coat he stooped over and pinned it on the shabby little coat of the brave Little Soldier.

"There, my boy," he said tenderly, "there's the Cross of the Legion of Honor from my country. My king gave it to me for a trifling service, and I thought I was proud of it; but today I have met a man who shames my courage and deserves it more than I."

The Little Soldier said, "Thank you!" very sweely, and then as the two men left the building they noticed the other children had quit fretting, and the house doctors and nurses were smiling or chatting good-naturedly together, while the golden music filled the place with happiness.

"It's always that way," said the doctor, with a little choke in his voice. "We are doing what we can for the little chap and hoping and praying for him to get well, but all we can do isn't half what he does for us."—Sunday-School Times.

THE SEVENTH BISCUIT.

I knew a boy who was a sophomore in college. He had been away from home just long enough to realize that the little house he came from was not very pretentious. And he began to be ashamed of the home where his mother sat, in a neat print frock, darning stockings; and where his father, dressed in blue overalls, fussed over the kitchen garden.

This boy made friends with a rich student who belonged to the same fraternity. And then, suddenly, at the beginning of the Easter holidays, the rich student walked into the boy's room, and said: "Say, Dick, the mater's giving a big party this week—and I'm tired of big parties. Can't I go home with you?"

And the boy, groaning inwardly, said as cheerfully as he could: "Why, certainly, old man, I'd be glad to have you."

So Dick came home with his rich friend. And the father, in overalls, met them at the station with a buggy. And the rich friend drove home sitting on a soap-box, for the buggy was small. And he laughed and said it was fun, but the boy was strangely silent. And the mother, in her freshest print dress, met them at the gate and kissed them both. "For," she said, "I know I'll love any of my son's friends!"

And the rich man's son thought of his coldly formal home, and he kissed her while he winked, just a bit, because there was something in his eyes that bothered him. But Dick dragged him away worriedly, and led him to the guest chamber.

And then they had supper in the cool dining-room, and there was home-made strawberry jam to eat, and hot biscuits. And as the rich student was eating his seventh biscuit he turned suddenly to the boy. "You're lucky, Dick," he said gruffly. "You don't know how lucky you are!" And then Dick understood.